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ABSTRACT

A resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1978, which set out the goal of a new, more just, and more effective world information and communication order, represented a new focus on conceptual rhetoric. Although there is as yet no settled definition of the new world order--a concept that involves cultural relations in the broadest sense--it has been agreed that the new order must be based on wider and better balanced information dissemination, that it should promote interdependence and cooperation between developing and developed nations, and that it should strive for an expanded and progressively more equal dialogue between differing societies. In cases where the free circulation of information conflicts with other values, such as the protection of personal privacy and the preservation of cultural diversity, information flow should be treated as a preferred freedom, and competing values should be given maximum scope short of curtailing that freedom. Those in developed nations should aim for more information exchange with developing nations in order to understand the full world community. The objective--to which the United States is committed--should be information freedom now for all those equipped to participate, and full participation as soon as possible for those currently disabled. (GT)

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TOWARDS AN ACCEPTABLE CONCEPT

OF THE

NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER

An Address Prepared for Delivery by

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At The

U.S.-JAPAN SYMPOSIUM

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PROFESSOR HORTON AND DISTINGUISHED GUESTS:

IT IS INDEED A PLEASURE FOR ME TO TAKE PART IN THIS THOUGHTFULLY STRUCTURED U. S. - JAPAN SYMPOSIUM ON COMPARATIVE AND COMMUNAL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICIES.

AS YOU KNOW, WE DEBATED AND NEGOTIATED SUCH ISSUES AT SOME LENGTH AT LAST NOVEMBER'S UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE. ON THAT OCCASION, AS ON OTHERS, THE U. S. AND JAPANESE DELEGATIONS MAINTAINED CLOSE AND VERY CORDIAL CONSULTATIONS. AT ONE POINT OUR JAPANESE FRIENDS ACTUALLY SHARED WITH US THE INSTRUCTIONS THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN BY THE FOREIGN OFFICE IN TOKYO. THESE WERE, FIRST, TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH THE UNITED STATES AND, SECOND, TO DO NOTHING THAT WOULD OFFEND THE FREE AND INDEPENDENT PRESS. I EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THEIR PREDICAMENT, SINCE CRITICISM BY THE MEDIA IS AN INEVITABLE AND NO DOUBT A SALUTARY ACCOMPANIMENT TO ANY EFFORTS AT CREATIVE CONSENSUS BUILDING IN THIS SENSITIVE FIELD. I HOPE YOU WILL BEAR WITH ME THIS EVENING AS I RISK FURTHER SUCH CRITICISM BY MY CHOICE OF A TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION.

Last December the United States and Japan joined in the consensus adoption at the UN General Assembly of a resolution setting out for the first time the goal of a New World Information Order. The actual language was much more carefully chosen, and I cite it because the Japanese Government was forthrightly insistent upon its faithful reproduction in subsequent resolutions adopted at the Kuala Lumpur conference of UNESCO on Communications Policies in the Asian and Pacific regions. What we subscribed to was the goal of a "new, more just and more effective world information and communication order" -- implying an evolutionary process rather than a radical break, and implying also that existing tendencies towards justice as well as effectiveness need to be strengthened in order to make the system work to everyone's advantage.

But although it was not radical, the adoption of the UN resolution did mark a significant new departure in the approach of the industrialized democracies. Hitherto we had tended to downplay conceptual rhetoric and to focus instead on the adoption of concrete and practical measures that could move in the direction of equalizing information relationships among societies. Those measures

ARE STILL VERY IMPORTANT, AND OUR TWO COUNTRIES ARE IN THE VANGUARD OF EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THEM. BUT AFTER THE UN RESOLUTION, I WOULD SUBMIT THAT THEY ARE NO LONGER SUFFICIENT. THE WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER HAS YET TO BE DEFINED WITH ANY PARTICULARITY IN A WAY THAT CAN COMMAND WIDESPREAD CONSENT. IT IS INCUMBENT ON US IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD TO INTRODUCE OUR OWN THEORETICAL FORMULATION, FAITHFUL TO LIBERTARIAN TRADITIONS BUT ALSO RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD. THAT IS THE TASK I HAVE SET FOR MYSELF TO BEGIN THIS EVENING.

LET ME STATE AT THE OUTSET THAT THIS IS NOT A TASK WE APPROACH WITH THANKSGIVING. WE WOULD PREFER, IF POSSIBLE, TO AVOID IMPRISONING IN ANY HARD DEFINITION SO DELICATE AND SENSITIVE A MATTER AS WORLD INFORMATION RELATIONSHIPS. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE KIND OF INFORMATION THAT JAPANESE AND AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE GOING TO BE RECEIVING ABOUT QUESTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ON WHICH THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES MUST MAKE DECISIONS. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT CULTURAL RELATIONS IN THE BROADEST SENSE: THE KIND OF IMAGE WE ARE FREE TO PUBLISH ABOUT OURSELVES, AND THE QUALITY

OF IMPRESSIONS WE RECEIVE FROM OTHER SOCIETIES. WE ARE TALKING ULTIMATELY ABOUT WHETHER A STABLE WORLD ORDER CAN BE FOUNDED ON SUSPICION OR WHETHER IT REQUIRES THE CLEAREST POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING.

THESE ARE MATTERS OF THE DEEPEST IMPORTANCE TO US ALL, AND MAINTAINING FREEDOM OF CHOICE TO TRANSMIT AND RECEIVE INFORMATION OF ALL KINDS IS THEREFORE A TRULY PRECIOUS IMPERATIVE.

BUT THESE CONSIDERATIONS ARGUE FOR ENGAGEMENT RATHER THAN DISENGAGEMENT IN THE CONCEPTUAL PROCESS THAT WILL LEAD TO DEFINITION OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER. THE ISSUES PRESENTED BY THAT DEFINITIONAL REQUIREMENT ARE GOING TO BE WITH US FOR A LONG TIME. THEY WILL NOT GO AWAY SIMPLY BECAUSE WE MIGHT PREFER TO IGNORE THEM. THE NEW WORLD ORDER SPRINGS FROM A DEEP DESIRE TO REDRESS NEO-COLONIAL STATUS IN THE WORLD, TO REMEDY HISTORIC DISPARITIES AND DEPENDENCIES AS THEY ARE CALLED, WHICH IS IN ANY EVENT IRRESISTIBLE. OUR OWN HISTORY AND SENSE OF MISSION IN THE UNITED STATES ARE FAVORABLY INCLINED TO THIS EVOLUTION. WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DIVERT OR DEFER THE EVOLUTIONARY

PRESSURE FOR A WHILE, BUT EVENTUALLY IT WOULD BREAK THROUGH. AND WE ARE IN A FAR BETTER CONDITION TO SHAPE THE FUTURE COURSE OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER AS CO-ARCHITECTS THAN IF WE WERE FOLLOWING A POLICY OF DETACHMENT. THAT, AS I SEE IT, IS THE CENTRAL POINT.

SO IT IS THAT I RETURN TO THE TASK OF THEORETICAL FORMULATION OF AN UNSPECIFIED CONCEPT. ACTUALLY, WE DO HAVE SOME GUIDANCE FROM THE RELEVANT UN AND UNESCO RESOLUTIONS. EVEN THOUGH THERE IS AS YET NO SETTLED DEFINITION OF THE NEW ORDER, THREE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS HAVE BEEN AGREED.

FIRST, THE NEW ORDER MUST BE "BASED ON THE FREE CIRCULATION AND WIDER AND BETTER-BALANCED DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION." (UNGA RESOLUTION)

SECOND, IT SHOULD AIM TO "CHANGE THE SITUATION OF DEPENDENCE OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION, AND TO REPLACE IT WITH RELATIONSHIPS OF INTERDEPENDENCE AND COOPERATION." (UNESCO RESOLUTION)

THIRD, IT SHOULD STRIVE TO REALIZE "THE BENEFITS THAT MIGHT ACCRUE TO THE PEOPLES OF THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, AND OF THE WORLD, FROM AN EXPANDED OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THE AUTHENTIC VOICE OF DIFFERING SOCIETIES AND CULTURES IN A DIALOGUE MADE PROGRESSIVELY MORE EQUAL." (UNESCO RESOLUTION)

THE COMMON THEME IN ALL THIS, I SUGGEST, IS THAT THE REMEDY FOR INJUSTICE OR INEFFECTIVENESS IN WORLD COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIPS MUST BE MORE INFORMATION AND NOT LESS. THIS IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE WE ALL KNOW THAT INFORMATION IS OCCASIONALLY AN IRRITANT IN WORLD AFFAIRS. PERHAPS WHAT WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS IS A MUTUALITY OF IRRITATION. BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT WHEN FRICTION OCCURS THERE ARE AVENUES FOR ACCOMMODATION OF THE COMPETING VALUES THAT DO NOT REQUIRE THE SUPPRESSION OF INFORMATION FREEDOM.

THE COLLISION BETWEEN FREE CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION AND OTHER SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES CAN TAKE A NUMBER OF FORMS. WE SHOULD BEGIN TO ACKNOWLEDGE THESE COMPETING VALUES AND DEAL WITH THEM AS SUCH. THERE IS FOR EXAMPLE

THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL PRIVACY, WHICH WE ARE LEARNING CAN BE ACCOMMODATED WITH NO SUBSTANTIAL DISTORTION TO THE FLOW OF INFORMATION. I WOULD REFER YOU TO A THOUGHTFULLY BALANCED TREATMENT OF THIS QUESTION LAST AUGUST BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF SWEDEN -- A COUNTRY THAT HAS BEEN MUCH TROUBLED BY THE PRIVACY QUESTION. THEN THERE ARE THE NEW COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES AND SERVICES, WHICH CAN ON OCCASION GIVE RISE TO CONCERNS ABOUT THE VIABILITY OF ESTABLISHED OR EMERGING INDUSTRIES, AND ABOUT IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT. THESE ARE IMPORTANT BUT MAINLY TRANSITIONAL CONCERNS, WHICH CAN BE TREATED WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT RELATIONSHIPS. SOMETIMES ONE HEARS COMPLAINT OF INFRINGEMENT ON NATIONAL SECURITY, AS WHEN ONE NATION FINDS ITSELF PRECARIOUSLY DEPENDENT FOR SENSITIVE INFORMATION ON COMPUTERIZED DEPOSITORIES OF ANOTHER. HERE THERE IS THE SIMPLE REMEDY OF MAINTAINING DUPLICATE RECORDS WITHIN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN -- TO WHICH SHOULD BE JOINED A RECOGNITION THAT INFORMATION INDUSTRIES (AND THEIR HOME GOVERNMENTS) CANNOT STAY IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS UNLESS THEY DISPLAY A RECORD OF FAITHFUL AND UNBROKEN SERVICE.

THE EFFECT OF INFORMATION ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS PROBABLY A DEEPER AND MORE PERVASIVE CONCERN. NO ONE WANTS TO PROMOTE A PROCESS OF CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION.

YET THERE IS ANXIETY THAT THE CONTROL OF INFORMATION RESOURCES BY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES MAY IMPOSE A GRAMMAR AND A DICTIONARY -- A WAY OF SEEING AND DESCRIBING THE WORLD -- ON OTHER SOCIETIES. I MUST SAY I THINK THIS ALLEGATION DOES DISCREDIT TO THE RICHNESS AND RESILIENCE OF LOCAL CULTURES EVERYWHERE. CERTAINLY THERE MUST BE RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY. BUT AGAIN THIS CAN BEST BE DONE BY BUILDING UP THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION CAPACITIES OF ALL SOCIETIES, SO THEY CAN TELL US ABOUT THEMSELVES IN THEIR OWN WAY. WE CANNOT LEARN TO RESPECT A CULTURAL EXPRESSION THAT WE CANNOT HEAR, AND WE NEED FOR OUR OWN ENRICHMENT TO BECOME ABLE TO HEAR IT.

WHAT THIS BRIEF SURVEY LEADS TO IS THE QUESTION OF WHAT RULE OF BEHAVIOR SHOULD PREVAIL WHEN INFORMATION FREEDOM BUMPS UP AGAINST ANOTHER IMPORTANT SOCIAL VALUE. CLEARLY THE IMPERATIVE OF FREE CIRCULATION CANNOT SIMPLY ENGULF THE COMPETING VALUE; THERE MUST BE SOME CONSIDERATION OF ITS MERITS AND OF WAYS IN WHICH IT MAY BE ACCOMMODATED. CLEARLY ALSO THE FREE FLOW OF

INFORMATION CANNOT BE REQUIRED TO NEGOTIATE ITS WAY AROUND ANY AND EVERY OBSTACLE THAT MAY BE THROWN IN ITS WAY; "FREEDOM" WOULD BE QUICKLY ERODED. I SUGGEST THE ANSWER, WHICH SHOULD BE INCORPORATED IN THE NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER, IS TO TREAT INFORMATION FLOW AS A "PREFERRED FREEDOM," THAT IS, A VALUE WITH PRESUMPTIVE VALIDITY.

THIS IS THE WAY OUR U. S. SUPREME COURT HAS TREATED THE FIRST AMENDMENT VALUES OF FREE SPEECH AND FREE PRESS AND FREE ASSOCIATION. THEY ARE PREFERRED FREEDOMS, WHICH MEANS THEY MUST BEND TO ADMIT OTHER VALUES ONLY IF THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO REALIZE THE COMPETING VALUE. IN MOST INSTANCES THAT IS NOT NECESSARY, AND IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT -- WITH ITS HORIZONTAL RATHER THAN VERTICAL LEGAL ORDER -- IT SHOULD ALMOST ALWAYS BE POSSIBLE TO FIND ROOM FOR COMPETING VALUES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INFORMATION FREEDOM. THIS IS WHAT A "PREFERRED FREEDOM" SHOULD MEAN -- THAT FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IS RESPECTED AND THAT COMPETING VALUES ARE GIVEN MAXIMUM SCOPE SHORT OF CURTAILING THAT FREEDOM.

I SUGGEST THIS FORMULATION NOT BECAUSE IT COMES FROM OUR SUPREME COURT BUT BECAUSE IT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO WELL-ORDERED INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS. WHAT COULD BE MORE BASIC THAN THE FREE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND IDEAS? WITHOUT IT, HOW CAN WE COME TO UNDERSTAND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TENSIONS? FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IS THE PRECONDITION FOR DEALING WITH ALL THE OTHER PROBLEMS THAT SHOULD COMMAND OUR ATTENTION. THAT IS WHY IT SHOULD BE A PREFERRED FREEDOM, AND WHY THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SHOULD WISH IT TO BE. FOR ONLY INFORMATION CAN ENERGIZE SOCIETIES BEHIND WIDELY SHARED PURPOSES AND ENRICH THE COMMON UNDERSTANDING BY CARRYING THE STORY OF DIFFERING CULTURES AND PEOPLES.

ONE OF THOSE WIDELY SHARED PURPOSES IS -- IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE UN RESOLUTION -- THE "WIDER AND BETTER BALANCED DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION." THIS IS NOT IN CONFLICT WITH OUR "PREFERRED FREEDOM" BUT IN FULFILLMENT OF IT. A ONE-SIDED CONVERSATION IS NOT A CONVERSATION AT ALL. WE WANT TO EXCHANGE POINTS OF VIEW, NOT SIMPLY REPEAT WHAT IS ALREADY FAMILIAR. HERE I CAN SPEAK VERY CLOSE TO HOME. THE MANDATE I HAVE FROM PRESIDENT CARTER IS CLEAR ON THIS POINT: "IT IS IN OUR

INTEREST," HE HAS SAID, "AND IN THE INTEREST OF OTHER NATIONS, THAT AMERICANS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERSTAND THE HISTORIES, CULTURES AND PROBLEMS OF OTHERS, SO THAT WE CAN COME TO UNDERSTAND THEIR HOPES, PERCEPTIONS AND ASPIRATIONS." AND SO I CAN APPROACH THIS VERY SELFISHLY, AS A NEED AND AN INTEREST OF OUR OWN SOCIETY TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE VITAL EXPRESSION OF OTHER CULTURES. WE IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ARE CULTURALLY UNDERNOURISHED WHEN IT COMES TO UNDERSTANDING THE FULL WORLD COMMUNITY. WE SHOULD JOIN UNRESERVEDLY IN THE SEARCH FOR WAYS OF PROMOTING AN AMPLER AND RICHER DIALOGUE.

THE OBJECTIVE WILL HAVE TO BE DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS: INFORMATION FREEDOM NOW FOR ALL THOSE EQUIPPED TO PARTICIPATE, AND FULL PARTICIPATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR THOSE CURRENTLY DISABLED. THE UNITED STATES HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO PROMOTING UNIVERSAL PARTICIPATION, AND WE MEAN TO HONOR THAT PLEDGE. BUT IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT WE WILL NEED COOPERATION TO BRING ABOUT INTERNAL CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATORY FREEDOM. LIMITS TO THE FLOW OF INFORMATION WITHIN ANY SOCIETY -- WHETHER BY REGULATORY EXCLUSIONS OR THE WITHHOLDING OF MEANS OF COMMUNICATION -- WILL INEVITABLY CURTAIL THE WIDER AND BETTER BALANCED DISSEMINATION WE ARE ALL PLEDGED TO SEEK.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT AND A BASIC POINT. WE CANNOT IGNORE THE INTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER, EVEN THOUGH ATTENTION TO IT MAY BRING SOME DISCOMFORT. RECENTLY AN EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNICATIONS SCHOLAR PROPOSED THAT WE ABANDON THE NEW WORLD ORDER, AND SETTLE INSTEAD FOR A "SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION." I CAN UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVATION, BUT I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT IT WILL NOT SUFFICE. WE ARE DEALING NOT JUST WITH RELATIONS AMONG STATES, BUT ALSO AND FUNDAMENTALLY WITH THE FULFILLMENT OF HUMAN POTENTIAL. WE MUST ACCORDINGLY CONCERN OURSELVES WITH PEOPLES AND CULTURES AS WELL AS WITH NATIONS.

SUBJECT TO THAT OBSERVATION, WE IN THE UNITED STATES ARE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE IN PRACTICAL WAYS TO THE BUILDING UP OF IMPROVED INFORMATION PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION CAPACITIES, AND ALSO TO DOING WHAT WE CAN TO INTEREST OUR INDEPENDENT MEDIA OUTLETS IN CARRYING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MESSAGES FROM OTHER LANDS.

WE MUST ALL LEARN, DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ALIKE, TO LIFT OUR PAROCHIAL BLINDERS AND TO SHOW A GENUINE INTEREST AND RESPECT FOR OTHER POINTS OF VIEW.

THANK YOU.